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19 July 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Training

SUBJECT: Certain observations concerning the Clark Committee Report on CIA.

1. Pursuant to your request, made during the Director's meeting with the ADs yesterday, I am attempting in this memorandum to set down on paper the gist of certain observations which I have made to the top staff of the DD/P area concerning the Clark Committee Report. Although this has all been kept on an oral basis, I briefed the staff and requested them to brief others downward in the chain of command, for the express purpose of putting to rest some exaggerated and rather alarmist notions and rumors which were gaining currency as the result of the press handling of the Clark Committee Report.

2. The Clark Committee findings, conclusions and recommendations, taken collectively and in the whole, are by no means as adverse and derogatory as some newspaper reporters and columnists would lead one to believe. Most, if not all, of the adversely critical material in the secret reports were included in the published report; but much of the favorable and laudatory material in the secret reports was omitted from the published report. Some writers who are apparently unfriendly to the Agency have seized upon portions of the published material and have enlarged upon it, quoted passages out of context, and otherwise managed to create the impression that the Agency was found egregiously wanting and taken heavily to task by the Clark Committee. On the basis of the very thorough analysis which has been made of the portion of the report dealing with the Clandestine Services, their personnel and operations, I would say that there are no criticisms of such an exaggerated or apparently hostile character that we cannot live with them, and that there are in fact some very favorable findings and conclusions which tend to give the report a considerable degree of balance. Two or three of the recommendations having to do with organization will presumably not be found feasible or otherwise acceptable, especially those which are regarded as calling for retrograde steps. (We know from actual experience that a complete separation of secret intelligence activities from operations in the political action field does not produce any panacea -- when we had it that way we were still critically short of intelligence concerning Soviet capabilities and intentions. This is the inadequacy most pointedly criticized in the report, and the Agency, of course, makes no claim that we have achieved a satisfactory degree of success in this regard.)

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3. The portion of the report from which we can draw the greatest amount of satisfaction and encouragement is the finding and conclusion which substantially vindicates the Agency with regard to the McCarthy-type charges of Communist infiltration and subversive design. The Clark Committee goes about as far as could ever be expected of any investigating committee in the direction of giving the Agency a clean bill of health. An almost equally important finding of a favorable character is that which certifies to our apparent regularity as regards the expenditure of unvouchered funds. In fact, if the report contained no other favorable elements than those relating to these two extremely critical points, we would have much to be thankful for, since it is in precisely these areas that the most serious charges have been hurled against the Agency and any appreciable measure of culpability would be most devastating. In order to appreciate fully the significance of these findings, the following points should be borne in mind:

a. Twice within a very short space of time the clandestine Services have been thoroughly investigated and in each case -- although the approach and motivation were different -- we have come off clean and whole;

b. Although the Declittle Committee was suspected by some of being friendly and generally well-disposed toward the Agency, there is no doubt that the group of hard-working individuals who made up that committee called their shots as they saw them, and would have considered it their duty to the President and to the public to point out all inadequacies, and worse, which they might have found;

c. Whatever else may be said of the outlook and orientation of the Clark Committee, certainly no one, repeat NO ONE, has ever suggested that its purpose was to "whitewash" the Agency -- if anything a contrary impression was created by certain statements and actions on the part of the Chairman which became matters of public knowledge, viz., the published report of his having called upon and solicited advice from Senator McCarthy, and the mere or less public solicitation of any and all adverse information concerning CIA and its personnel; and

d. The fact that all enemies of the Agency and people with special axes to grind were given full opportunity by the Clark Committee to be heard, with the result that just about every "dead cat" that could be thrown was, in fact, cut loose at us -- but without appreciable adverse effect in so far as this can be determined from the contents of the report.

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It is submitted that under the circumstances the personnel of this Agency are entitled to feel very reassured and, in fact, proud to belong to an organization which has so successfully withstood the acid test of these unprecedented investigations. I consider that we are entitled to hold our heads high and to indulge ourselves in a modest amount of self-congratulation. Certainly there is no longer any reason for the personnel of this Agency to feel that the Agency is under the gun or required to offer apologies. [It is my personal opinion that the time has now arrived when this Agency can and should go over onto the attack against its irresponsible critics. This is, of course, a matter which must be handled with the greatest of care, and subordinate officials should not undertake any free-wheeling initiative in this regard -- but in well-calculated ways I believe that we should let it be understood that the "open season" on CIA is closed and that it is no longer a fashionable or profitable pursuit to sling mud at our people.]

(Signed) FRANK O. WISNER

FRANK O. WISNER
Deputy Director (Plans)

cc: DCI
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